



Personnel

THE ENLISTED FORCE STRUCTURE

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This instruction defines the enlisted force structure, specifies the responsibilities of each enlisted rank within the structure, and establishes a title for each rank and terms of address for Air Force enlisted personnel. It implements AFPD 36-29. This instruction establishes mandatory NCO responsibilities. Failure to observe the mandatory provisions of this instruction in paragraphs 3.1.3 and 4.1, by military personnel, is a violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). It applies to all enlisted members of the Air Force, Air National Guard (ANG), and US Air Force Reserve (AFRES) personnel.

The Privacy Act of 1974 affects this instruction. Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), Sections 8013 and 901 give the authority to collect and maintain the data for this instruction. Process supplements to this instruction as shown in Air Force Instruction (AFI) 37-160, volume 1, table 3.2, *The Air Force Publications and Forms Management Programs--Developing and Processing Publications*. Refer to attachment 1 for a glossary of references, abbreviations, and acronyms.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Philosophy of the Enlisted Force Structure.

- 1.1.1. Provide a stable career structure for enlisted personnel to meet changing Air Force mission requirements for individuals with particular skills and levels of experience.
- 1.1.2. Provide personnel an opportunity for individual professional military career growth.
- 1.1.3. Carefully manage formal training, military education and promotions to match enlisted force structure capabilities with future Air Force requirements.
- 1.1.4. Reflect core values of the Air Force (Integrity, Service Before Self, and Excellence) which are essential to the profession of arms. Core values are the basis for our policies, guidance, and overall focus. Values build personal dedication and commitment to the Air Force, it's mission, and to all Air Force members.

NOTE: Inherent within the structure is a responsibility for NCOs and Senior NCOs to serve as mentors for those junior members who will follow them.

1.2. Purpose of the Enlisted Force Structure. To define:

- 1.2.1. Specific responsibilities for each enlisted rank.
- 1.2.2. Relationships between enlisted ranks and how each rank fits into the organization.
- 1.2.3. Career progression through the enlisted ranks.

1.3. Three-Tier Enlisted Force Structure.

- 1.3.1. The enlisted force is comprised of distinct and separate ranks, each correlated to increasing levels of training, education, technical competence, experience, leadership, and managerial responsibilities.

Chapter 2

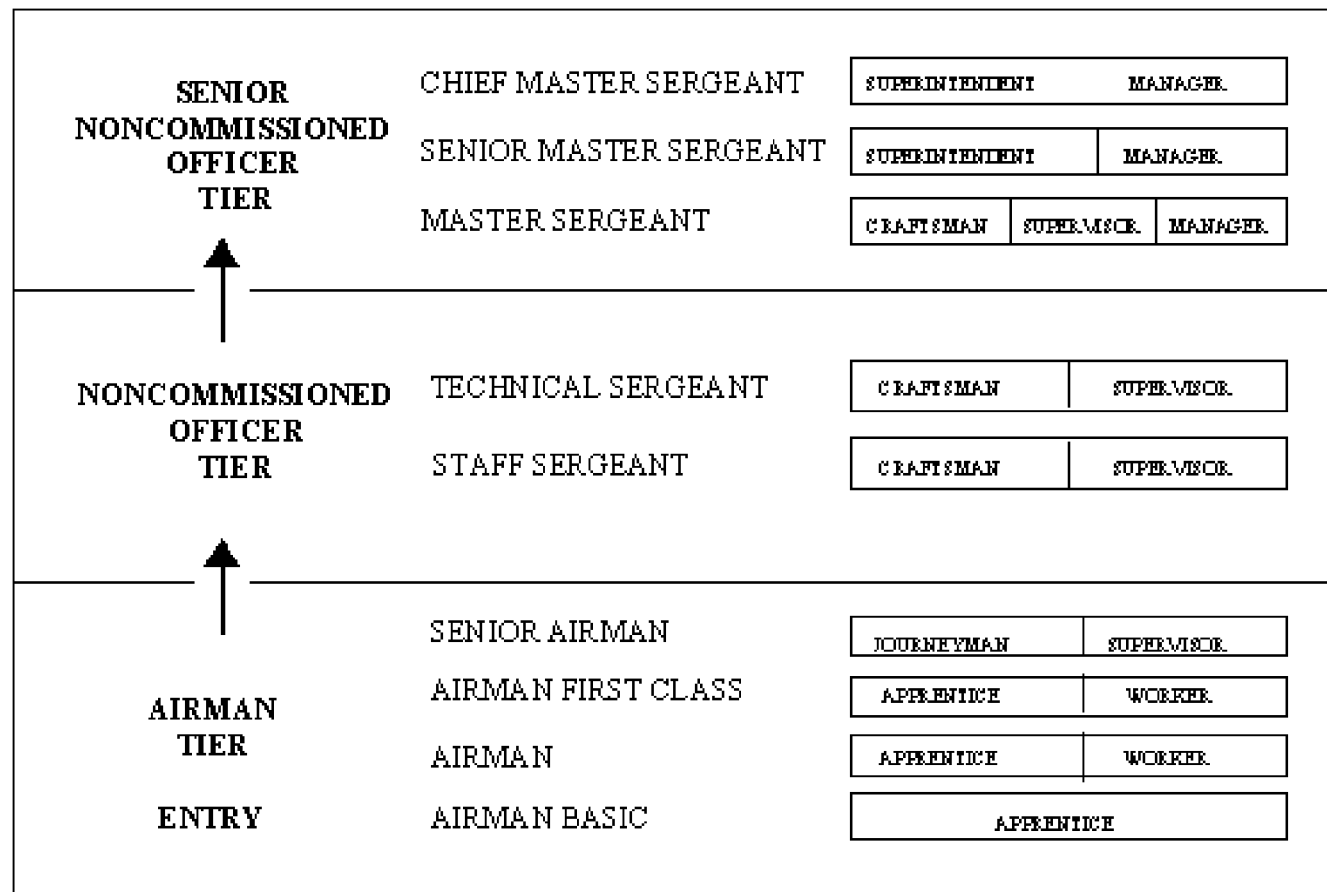
THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

2.1. The NCO. In 1977 the enlisted force structure was reorganized into three tiers shown in figure 2.1. As a member progresses from Airman Basic to Senior Airman, the member acquires the discipline, skills, and professional military education necessary to become eligible for NCO status. NCOs serve in the top two tiers as follows:

2.2. The Senior NCO Tier. The top three ranks of the enlisted force structure are Master Sergeant, Senior Master Sergeant, and Chief Master Sergeant. This tier is where personnel transition from craftsman to leadership and managerial positions. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is selected from eligible Chief Master Sergeants.

2.3. The NCO Tier. This tier is where Sergeants, Staff Sergeants, and Technical Sergeants transition from workers and craftsman to supervisory positions as they develop military leadership skills and attend professional military education.

Figure 2.1. The Enlisted Force Structure.



Chapter 3

NCO RANK AND AUTHORITY

3.1. Rank and Authority. As members of the profession of arms, all enlisted members are sworn to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and to obey the orders of all officers appointed over them. Within the enlisted ranks, NCOs take rank and precedence over all airmen and other NCOs according to rank. Within the same rank - Date of Rank (DOR), Total Active Federal Military Service Date (TAFMSD), Total Military Service Date (TMSD), and Date of Birth (DOB) determine the process. Responsibility and accountability increase commensurate with rank. Within each rank, responsibility for leading rests on the individual who is senior in rank. This policy stems from time-honored military customs and traditions.

3.1.1. NCOs are delegated the authority necessary to exercise leadership commensurate to their rank and assigned responsibility. They are given privileges commensurate with their rank and are not assigned duties that will compromise their position.

3.1.2. NCOs carry out orders of those appointed over them by virtue of the authority vested in their rank. This is done by effectively employing personnel, material, equipment, and other resources under their control. They represent the Air Force NCO Corps to all whom they come in contact. Personal integrity, loyalty, leadership, dedication, and devotion to duty must remain above reproach. As an Air Force leader, manager, and supervisor, the NCO must uphold Air Force policies, traditions, and standards. The NCO should, by word and example, epitomize the Air Force as a profession and a way of life for the military and civilian communities.

3.1.3. NCOs give orders in the exercise of their duties. A deliberate failure to obey these orders is a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Article 91. NCOs have apprehension authority under UCMJ, Article 92 and have apprehension authority under UCMJ, Article 7 (duty status determines ANG and AFRES authority).

Chapter 4

GENERAL NCO RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. Mandatory Requirements. NCOs Must:

- 4.1.1. Attain and maintain a skill level commensurate with their rank, and maintain a high degree of proficiency in their awarded specialty as outlined in their Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP). (AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Training*; AFP 36-22, *Military Training*).
- 4.1.2. Secure and promote professional military education (PME) for themselves and subordinates to develop and cultivate leadership skills and professional development. (AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*)
- 4.1.3. Develop and maintain a thorough understanding of Air Force leadership (AFP 35-49, *Air Force Leadership*) and supervisory techniques (AFP 39-15, *Airman and NCO Feedback System*; AFI 36-2403, *The Enlisted Evaluation System*). Apply these supervisory techniques to support mission objectives.
- 4.1.4. Possess a thorough understanding of Air Force standards, customs, and courtesies while maintaining exemplary standards of behavior, including personal conduct, loyalty, and personal appearance (AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*), both on and off duty. Exercising leadership by example, NCOs must be alert to correct personnel who violate military standards. (AFPD 36-29, *Military Standards*)
- 4.1.5. Ensure proper custody, care, and safekeeping of property or funds entrusted into their possession or supervision.
- 4.1.6. Accept and execute duties, instructions, responsibilities, and orders in a timely manner.
- 4.1.7. Understand and actively support the Air Force human resources development programs, such as Equal Opportunity and Treatment and Human Relations Education as outlined in AFI 36-2701, *Social Actions Program*. Counsel subordinates on Air Force policies relating to substance abuse. (AFI 44-120, *Drug Abuse Testing Program*; AFI 44-121, *Alcoholism Rehabilitation Program*).
- 4.1.8. Actively participate in Air Force health and safety programs by:
 - 4.1.8.1. Counseling members concerning any on and off duty conduct detrimental to an individual or co-workers health and safety. NCOs instruct subordinates in the safe practices observed in daily operations and enforce these standards.
 - 4.1.8.2. Eliminating any potential hazard while promoting and employing on and off duty mishap prevention techniques (AFI 91-202, *The US Air Force Mishap Prevention Program*) to eliminate and reduce the number and frequency of mishaps.
- 4.1.9. Educate personnel on their CFETP (AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Training*; AFP 36-22, *Military Training*) and relate progress in career-path education and training. All personnel should understand how their CFETP reflects career field life-cycle education and training requirements.
- 4.1.10. Plan, develop, conduct, and supervise individual and group training in technical and military subjects. (AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Training*; AFP 36-22).
- 4.1.11. Actively support the Air Force's policy of "zero tolerance" for discrimination and sexual harassment. NCOs must create an environment free of any behaviors that hinder performance and which allows every member to achieve their full potential and maximize their contribution.

4.2. Knowledge of References. Be familiar with:

- 4.2.1. The UCMJ, Manual for Courts-Martial, DoD 5500.7, Joint Ethics Regulation, and AFPD 36-29, *Military Standards*.
- 4.2.2. The mission and history of the Air Force and unit of assignment. (AFM 1-1, Volumes 1 and 2, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*)
- 4.2.3. Drill and ceremony procedures. (AFR 50-14, *Drill and Ceremonies*)
- 4.2.4. Air Force protocol and customs and courtesies practices and procedures.
- 4.2.5. Air Force promotion programs. (AFI 36-2502, *Airman Promotion Program*)
- 4.2.6. The Enlisted Assignment System, EQUAL, EQUAL Plus, and the assignment selection process. (AFI 36-2110, *Assignments*)
- 4.2.7. Air Force Awards and Decorations Program. (AFI 26-2803, *Air Force Awards and Decorations Program*)
- 4.2.8. ANG members must be familiar with applicable ANG governing Instructions.

4.3. Self-Involvement and Assistance. Self-Involve and assist subordinates to.

- 4.3.1. Adjust to the military environment and their unit of assignment. NCOs should frequent dining facilities, chapel centers, recreation facilities, dormitories, and enlisted clubs to possess a better understanding of opportunities and problems confronting their personnel.
- 4.3.2. Resolve personal problems by direct assistance or referral to appropriate agencies.

- 4.3.3. Observe, counsel, and correct individuals on both on and off duty performance, professional relationships, and personal appearance. (AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*).
 - 4.3.4. Correct marginal or substandard behavior or duty performance.
 - 4.3.5. Appropriately recognize and reward those individuals whose military conduct, bearing, and performance clearly exceed established standards. Participate in quarterly and annual awards programs. (AFI 26-2803, *Air Force Awards and Decorations Program*)
 - 4.3.6. Actively participate and encourage others to participate in programs offered through education services, with special emphasis on career development courses and the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) programs.
 - 4.3.7. Exercise their right and responsibility to vote in the United States election processes. Ensure subordinates are aware of and afforded the opportunity to register and vote in elections.
 - 4.3.8. Support and participate in installation and unit activities. Membership in the enlisted clubs and professional and unit organizations is strongly encouraged. Join and support local and national professional enlisted organizations (i.e., Chiefs Groups, TOP-3, unit booster clubs, Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA), Noncommissioned Officers Association (NCOA), Air Force Association (AFA), etc.)
 - 4.3.9. Implement approved policies, directives, and programs. Provide guidance and direction for subordinates to accomplish their assigned responsibilities.
 - 4.3.10. Learn, understand, and implement the principles of Quality Air Force (QAF). (AMCSP 501-10, *Measurement; Air Force Process Improvement Guide*, 1993; Total Quality Management Guide, Vol I, 15 February 1990; *The Quality Approach*, 1993; *The Metrics Handbook*, 1 August 1991)
 - 4.3.11. Participate, support, and promote an overall understanding among personnel regarding the Air Force Weight and Fitness programs (AFI 40-502, *The Weight Management Program*; AFD 40-5, *Fitness and Weight Management*).
 - 4.3.12. Stay informed on issues concerning the military in general and the Air Force, in particular, being brought before Congress.
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Chapter 5

SPECIFIC NCO RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Senior NCOs (SNCOs).

5.1.1. Senior NCO Tier:

5.1.1.1. Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). Advisor to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all enlisted matters. The CMSAF is the senior enlisted member of the Air Force and takes precedence over all enlisted members while serving in the position (AFI 36-2109, *Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and Senior Enlisted Advisor Programs*). The official term of address is Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force or Chief.

5.1.1.2. Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA). The office symbol for SEAs is CCC and are CMSgts (AFI 36-2109, *Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and Senior Enlisted Advisor Programs*). SEAs are advisors to commanders (wing level and above) on all enlisted matters. The SEA, at the wing level, works directly with the first sergeants, chiefs group, "top three", and other organizations to promote the health, morale, and welfare of the enlisted force.

5.1.1.3. Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt). The rank of CMSgt is the highest enlisted rank in the U.S. Air Force, with the exception of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). CMSgts are superintendents and managers and provide senior enlisted leadership. CMSgts are assigned Chief Enlisted Manager (CEM) codes upon selection to CMSgt and may fill any managerial level position and perform all duties not prohibited by law or directive. CMSgts are advisors and enlisted force managers. The official term of address is Chief Master Sergeant or Chief.

5.1.1.4. Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt). SMSgts perform as superintendents or managers. Broad management skills are essential to exercise the responsibilities of the higher leadership positions in which SMSgts serve. The 9-skill level "Superintendent" is awarded when SMSgts sew-on E-8 and graduate from the in-resident USAF Senior NCO Academy (SNCOA) or equivalent sister service school. SMSgts should continue to further themselves in the total military profession to become viable candidates for unique assignment opportunities and future promotion selection consideration to the rank of CMSgt. The official term of address is Senior Master Sergeant or Sergeant.

5.1.1.5. Master Sergeant (MSgt). MSgts function primarily in craftsman, supervisory, and management capacities, as they prepare for more advanced leadership positions. This rank carries significantly increased responsibilities and requires a broad technical and managerial perspective.

The official term of address is Master Sergeant or Sergeant.

5.1.2. Professional Military Education (PME). SNCOs must seek every opportunity for continued professional development. SNCOs will enhance their leadership and management skills through attendance at the SNCOA (or other service equivalent

school) and must graduate before assuming the rank of CMSgt. Due to unique career/promotion policies, Air Reserve Component (ARC) MSgts and SMSgts may attend the SNCOA and may satisfy their promotion requirements through the resident or correspondence course. Active duty SNCOs who decline to attend the SNCOA are ineligible for promotion, denied reenlistment, and must retire, if eligible, or separate on their DOS. They are still eligible for reassignment if there is sufficient retainability to the DOS. (AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*)

5.1.3. Formal Civilian Education. SNCOs should seek a well-rounded formal civilian education as an integral part of preparing for increased responsibilities. Educational programs are valuable and enhance SNCOs capabilities and value to the Air Force. SNCOs should complete those degree programs offered through the CCAF or other voluntary military-sponsored educational programs. SNCOs must understand and properly counsel individuals on their responsibilities for upgrade training while pursuing off duty education.

5.1.4. Assignment and Utilization.

5.1.4.1. SNCOs are assigned duties commensurate with their skill level and rank. Their primary leadership duties are superintendent, supervisor, or manager (depending on the unit and their rank) of a flight, function, or activity. They should be used as Chief or NCOIC of a flight, section, or branch, as Superintendent of a division or unit, first sergeant, or, in special circumstances, as a Detachment Chief or Commandant. Every consideration should be given to avoid over supervision created by establishing unnecessary supervisory managerial levels. Proper use of SNCOs is necessary to allow them to exercise leadership and manage resources under their control.

5.1.4.2. SNCOs are responsible for leadership and developing personnel under their supervision into a cohesive team. Their teams must be capable of meeting any challenge and effectively accomplishing mission requirements. They must use the CFETP to ensure their personnel are technically qualified, and scheduled to attend appropriate PME courses to acquire leadership and management skills. They must demonstrate sincerity and genuine concern in assisting subordinates to participate in self-improvement efforts. They must ensure that the technical skills and professional development, acquired by their subordinates, are fully utilized.

5.1.4.3. SNCOs must be alert to detect adverse morale trends and provide feedback to commanders, immediate supervisors, officers, and staff chiefs. They must devote total effort in resolving the causes of any problem before it becomes a major issue.

5.1.4.4. SNCOs must establish and maintain rapport and communication with subordinates to remain attuned to their needs. By personal example and leadership, they encourage and motivate both on and off duty involvement in unit, base, and community activities.

5.1.4.5. SNCOs must ensure that enlisted members are treated fairly by all on-and off-duty agencies and activities. The SNCO must also ensure that the appropriate agencies are informed whenever such principles are violated and uncorrected deficiencies are reported to appropriate officials.

5.1.4.6. The SNCO must take the lead in achieving, maintaining, and enforcing Air Force standards, as well as good order and discipline. (AFPD 36-29, *Military Standards*)

5.2. NCOs.

5.2.1. NCO Tier:

5.2.1.1. Technical Sergeant (TSgt). TSgts hold a 7-skill level and are qualified to perform highly complex technical duties in addition to providing responsible supervision. They are responsible for the development of all enlisted personnel under their supervision. They must obtain maximum performance from each subordinate and ensure that the product or service is of the quality necessary for total mission effectiveness. TSgts will continuously strive to broaden and perfect their professional expertise and supervisory techniques. The official term of address is Technical Sergeant or Sergeant.

5.2.1.2. Staff Sergeant (SSgt). SSgts are primarily craftsmen with certain NCO supervisory responsibilities. They may hold either a 5 (Journeyman) or 7 (Craftsman) skill level. Completion of their 7-skill level through upgrade training is mandatory before promotion to TSgt. SSgt supervisory duties differ from those of the Technical Sergeant only in scope and span of control. SSgts strive for greater supervisory competence as they function in their technical capacity. They are responsible for their subordinates and the effective accomplishment of assigned tasks. They ensure proper and effective use of personnel and materiel. They must continuously strive to further their development as technicians and supervisors. The official term of address is Staff Sergeant or Sergeant.

5.2.1.3. Sergeant (Sgt). Sgts are also primarily craftsmen with certain NCO supervisory responsibilities. They hold a 5 (Journeyman) skill and must be promoted to Staff Sergeant prior to obtaining 10 years active duty. Sgts strive for greater supervisory competence as they function in their technical capacity. They are responsible for their subordinates and the effective accomplishment of assigned tasks. They ensure proper and effective use of personnel and materiel. They must continuously strive to further their development as technicians and supervisors. The official term of address is Sergeant.

5.2.2. PME. Technical Sergeants and Technical Sergeant selectees must graduate from an in-resident NCO Academy prior to assuming the rank of Master Sergeant. ARC SSgts and TSgts may attend in-resident NCOA or complete NCOA correspondence course to satisfy their promotion requirements. Active duty NCOs who decline to attend the NCOA are

ineligible for promotion, denied reenlistment, and must separate or retire, if eligible, on their DOS. They are still eligible for reassignment if they have sufficient retainability. (AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*)

5.2.3. Formal Civilian Education. To effectively perform as a craftsman-supervisor, and provide leadership, a well-rounded education is important. Personnel striving to attain the SNCO ranks should participate in both on and off duty education to the maximum extent possible. They should take full advantage of the educational services offered through the CCAF and military sponsored educational programs. NCOs must understand and properly counsel individuals on their responsibilities for upgrade training while pursuing off duty education.

5.2.4. Assignment and Utilization. NCOs must be assigned to positions that permit the use of both their supervisory and technical skills. They must, both on and off duty, demonstrate the exemplary attributes expected of dedicated professional NCOs by:

5.2.4.1. Ensuring that personnel and resources under their control are effectively used.

5.2.4.2. Remaining alert to detecting adverse morale trends and initiating corrective action within their control and providing the appropriate feedback to those appointed over them.

5.2.4.3. Maintaining the highest level of communication and rapport with subordinates, and remaining attuned to their needs.

5.2.4.4. Encouraging and motivating on and off duty involvement in unit and installation activities by leading the way.

5.2.4.5. Ensuring people are treated fairly by all on and off duty agencies and activities, and initiating corrective action in any instance which violates this principle.

5.2.4.6. Understanding the Air Force promotion programs. (AFI 36-2502, *Airman Promotion Program*)

5.2.4.7. Leading the way in encouraging, participating, and promoting physical fitness programs. (AFI 40-502, *The Weight Management Program*; AFD 40-5, *Fitness and Weight Management*).

Chapter 6

THE AIRMAN

6.1. The Airman Tier. This tier consists of Airman Basic, Airman, Airman First Class, and Senior Airman. It is the first tier of the three-tier enlisted structure.

6.2. Specific Responsibilities of the Airman Tier.

6.2.1. Ranks.

6.2.1.1. Senior Airman (SrA). Those personnel serving as a SrA are in a transition period from Journeyman-Worker to NCO. Development of supervisory and leadership skills through PME and individual study is essential. The 5-skill level (Journeyman) is awarded to each SrA who satisfies mandatory CFETP education and training requirements. All SrA conduct themselves in a manner commensurate with established standards, thereby asserting a positive influence on other airmen. The SrA must, at all times, present the image of competence, integrity, and pride. The official term of address is Senior Airman or Airman.

6.2.1.2. Airman First Class (A1C). A1C comply with Air Force standards and are role models for subordinates. They are expected to devote their efforts to mastering the skills required in their new career fields. An A1C may be a 3 (worker) or 1 (apprentice) skill level. The official term of address is Airman First Class or Airman.

6.2.1.3. Airman (Amn). The Amn, while still primarily an apprentice, is expected to understand and conform to military standards. An Amn may hold a 3 or 1 skill level. The official term of address is Airman.

6.2.1.4. Airman Basic (AB). The AB is an apprentice who is acquiring and demonstrating a knowledge of military customs, courtesies, traditions, and Air Force standards while learning both military and technical skills. An AB will usually be assigned a 1 skill level. The official term of address is Airman Basic or Airman.

6.2.2. PME. SrA with at least 48 months TAFMS will be scheduled to attend the Airman Leadership School (ALS). All active duty airmen must complete the resident ALS prior to assuming the rank of SSgt (members of the ARC unable to attend an in-resident program must complete the correspondence course).

6.2.3. Formal Civilian Education. All airmen should take advantage of both on-and off-duty educational opportunities, however, military courses of instruction, including skill level upgrade, will take priority. Those seeking civilian education opportunities should make obtaining a CCAF degree first priority. Attendance at on-and off-duty education programs should be handled on a case by case basis by the supervisor. Immediate supervisors should carefully consider the impact on career progression before recommending approval.

6.2.4. Assignment and Utilization. AB, Amn, and A1C are primarily in a training status. The SrA is primarily a journeyman and can be utilized in a supervisory position upon successful completion of the ALS. Airmen placed in charge of any work activity or in charge of other airmen have the authority to issue any lawful order appropriate for the completion of their

responsibilities. Failure to obey orders by those to whom their authority extends violate UCMJ, Article 92 (duty status determines ARC authority).

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Chief of Staff

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AFI 36-2110, *Assignments*
AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Training*
AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*
AFI 36-2403, *The Enlisted Evaluation System*
AFI 36-2502, *Airman Promotion Program*
AFI 36-2604, *Air Force Military Personnel Testing System*
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFI—Air Force Instructions
AFM—Air Force Manual
AFP—Air Force Pamphlet
AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive
AFR—Air Force Regulation
AFRES—United States Air Force Reserve
ALS—Airman Leadership School
AMCSP—Air Mobility Command Supplement
ANG—Air National Guard
ARC—Air Reserve Component
CCAF—Community College of the Air Force
CEM—Chief Enlisted Manager
CFETP—Career Field Education and Training Plan
DOB—Date of Birth
DOR—Date of Rank
NCO—Noncommissioned Officer
NCOA—Noncommissioned Officer Academy
PME—Professional Military Education
QAF—Quality Air Force
SNCO—Senior Noncommissioned Officer
SNCOA—Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy

TAFMS—Total Active Federal Military Service

TMSD—Total Military Service Date

UCMJ—Uniformed Code of Military Justice

RANKS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND TERMS OF ADDRESS

Rank	Abbreviations	Pay Grade	Terms of Address
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force	CMSAF	SNCO Tier (Special Rate)	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force or Chief
Chief Master Sergeant	CMSgt	E-9	Chief Master Sergeant of Chief
Senior Master Sergeant	SMSgt	E-8	Senior Master Sergeant or Sergeant
Master Sergeant	MSgt	E-7	Master Sergeant or Sergeant
		NCO Tier	
Technical Sergeant	TSgt	E-6	Technical Sergeant or Sergeant
Staff Sergeant	SSgt	E-5	Staff Sergeant or Sergeant
Sergeant	Sgt	E-4	Sergeant
		Airman Tier	
Senior Airman	SrA	E-4	Senior Airman or Airman
Airman First Class	A1C	E-3	Airman First Class or Airman
Airman	Amn	E-2	Airman
Airman Basic	AB	E-1	Airman Basic or Airman